

The Church

(formerly known as The Gathering Place
and Project Truth Community Church)

Group Supplement
Week of May 28
Sunday's Text: Psalm 1:1

David's admonition in Psalm 1:1 to avoid the company of the wicked seems straightforward enough, but living this way can be quite difficult. His own experience with Joab and his son Solomon's experience with his many wives reveal some of the pitfalls.

As David nears the end of his life, he names Solomon as his successor and gives him some very pointed instructions in 1 Kings 2:1-9. After telling him to follow God's Law, David tells Solomon to execute Joab, his army commander. Joab is David's nephew who has led his army for most of his reign quite successfully and to David's great advantage. Unfortunately he is also a ruthless and unscrupulous man who has no trouble eliminating any potential rival. So for his cold-blooded murder of Abner (Saul's army commander) and Amasa (Absalom's army commander and Joab's cousin), David says Joab needs to die (1 Kings 2:5-6). David has had an uneasy relationship with Joab that has both benefited him and cost him, so he advises Solomon to serve justice and remove his inappropriate influence from Solomon's court.

Solomon has no trouble dispatching Joab, especially since Joab has backed Solomon's rival for the throne, Adonijah. So in a short time Solomon sends Benaiah to Joab, who is claiming sanctuary in the Tabernacle, and he strikes him down for his crimes (1 Kings 2:28-34). Joab's wicked influence has been removed, but it isn't long before Solomon starts accumulating his own poor influences.

Looking at 1 Kings 11:1-8, Solomon's Achilles heel may appear to be sensuality, but it has as much to do with power and wealth as it does physical relationships. Solomon's poor choice of company in his many foreign wives is highlighted in his marriage to Pharaoh's daughter (11:1). The other approximately 700 wives are also of "royal birth" (11:3). The majority of these marriages are likely consummating treaties between Solomon and other rulers, bringing with the arrangements significant trade, wealth, and influence.

But the influence runs both ways. God has told the Israelites not to marry foreign women, but Solomon does so anyway. The result is what God predicted, "they will surely turn your hearts after their gods" (1 Kings 11:2). In fact, we're told that "Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites," (11:7) who was known for receiving child sacrifice. Solomon does similarly for his other wives, "who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods" (11:8).

This wicked influence in Solomon's life turns his priorities around, "so Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not follow the Lord completely, as David his father had done" (11:6). As a consequence, Solomon's son will lose the majority of the kingdom to a rival and the remainder of Solomon's reign will involve uprisings both at home and in the countries under Israel's rule (11:14-40). As Solomon chooses poor company, he chooses the satisfaction of his foreign wives, trade partners, and wealth over his allegiance to the one who gave it to him in the first place. Before long he is worshiping other gods alongside the God of Israel, undermining the very foundation of his successful reign, an agreement with God in which Solomon pledged his allegiance to God and God promised to establish his throne forever (1 Kings 9:4-5). He will conclude his reign respectably, but it will be the last of a united Israel.

Discussion Questions

What benefits and advantages can motivate our choices when it comes to choosing friends and others with whom we associate? What does society say we should pursue in relationships?

When might pursuing these advantages become a problem biblically? For example, Scripture talks in various terms about widows remarrying as a matter of economic provision. Can that become a problem?

What kind of company do you keep? What factors have influenced the relationships you have sought and fostered? How can these relationships be characterized by blessing?